

## WIN WITH WATER!

### Stewarding your Most Valuable Asset



Last time we wrote about managing the mechanical and electrical parts of a public drinking water system. The other half of the equation – and arguably the most important – are the professionals that keep the system running. Nearly every business is competing for new employees, while 25% of the US population will be 65 or older in the next few years. What are you doing to steward the people that keep your community running?

Attracting new workers starts with a broader knowledge of public water's many rewarding career opportunities. Retaining and advancing water workers requires innovative and creative partnerships between employees and management. Here are some suggestions to keep your workforce vibrant, sustainable, and

resilient:

- **Job Descriptions.** Understand the critical skills required for each position. Create job descriptions that meet at least 80% of the required skills. Be reasonable in your expectations.
- **Flexibility.** Balance position needs with employee work-life balance. Increased job flexibility (shift times, job sharing, performance-based goals) and “soft” benefits (training, education, advancement, flex time) are both increasingly attractive to workers and feasible for employees.
- **Compensation.** Water utility jobs are “recession proof” as they are critical services funded by user fees and municipal taxes. However, the take-home pay of the private sector can be more compelling than long-term public benefits such as retirement. In addition, raising your pay scale to the current labor market means doing the same for existing employees, or risking bad morale and attrition. Accurate job descriptions and position flexibility are attractive options to wage hikes.

Knowing your water system and the critical skills required to run it, and talking to current and prospective employees about their needs and what motivates them, are two essential elements of human asset management. NH Water Works Association provides operational and leadership training for public drinking water professionals, and would be pleased to talk with you about building your team to ensure continued safe, affordable, and reliable water services.

**Win with Water!** is an informational series to raise awareness and provide actionable steps to public water system managers, administrators, and policy makers.



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